

SIDE GALLERY

UBUNJI KIDOKORO



Sofa

Made by Ubunji Kidokoro
Japan, 1933
Bamboo, Brass

Measurements

120 × 77 × 76h cm
47,2 × 30,3 × 29,9h in

Provenance

Private collection, Japan

Literature

Japan Living Design, Exploring 20th-Century Modernism. Published by Japan Interior Designers Association. 40th Anniversary Commemorative Project. Tokyo, 2004. Pages 72, 73, 76 and 77.

Domus, n°269, April 1952, similar model p. 41 in an article about an exhibition curated by Kenzo Tange, Takashiyama, Tokyo

Details

The design was inspired by the idea that "I wanted to somehow use the familiarity with bamboo as a more meaningful and useful material in modern furniture" (Kogei News, January 1938 issue). All components are made from bamboo. The frame is made by joining together eight thin pieces of bamboo.

Biography

Ubunji Kidokoro (c. 1910–1945) was a Japanese cabinetmaker and furniture designer active in the 1930s whose work contributed significantly to the development of a distinctly Japanese response to international modernism. Associated with Mitsukoshi, Japan's oldest department store, he worked within a progressive context that sought to introduce modern furniture for a society long accustomed to floor seating, fostering experimentation with new forms and structures. Kidokoro's designs combined indigenous materials and craft traditions—most notably bamboo and laminated plywood—with modern structural principles, resulting in furniture that was both formally innovative and materially rooted in Japanese culture. His most celebrated work, the cantilevered bamboo armchair produced circa 1937, exemplifies this approach through its use of bent plywood and vertical bamboo slats fastened with brass studs, exploiting the elasticity and tensile strength of bamboo to create a lightweight yet resilient and responsive seat. Often discussed in relation to contemporaneous Western experiments with cantilevered and bentwood furniture, Kidokoro's work is distinguished by its translation of modernist structural logic into a language informed by local materials and mingei values rather than direct formal imitation. Although his career and life were cut short by the Second World War, his surviving works are held in major international museum collections and are regarded as important examples of prewar Japanese modern furniture, occupying a key position at the intersection of craft, modernity, and material innovation.